

Czech Grammar Primer

This is incomplete!

Introduction to Czech Grammar

Czech is quite the language. A wonderful, beautiful and expressive language. It has many interesting grammatical features and a very interesting linguistic history. Welcome to the wonderful world of Czech.

This guide is meant to be a primer of the entire Czech language. Which is a very large task. But I've done my best to cover everything you need to know to understand Czech. And that's the first important difference between this guide to Czech and most other guides you might find.

The majority of grammar texts exist to help learners *speak* the language and produce "correct" language. That is not the goal of this guide. My primer is aimed at helping you understand the grammar that is used in Czech, so that you can more easily acquire it.

Through [decades of Second Language Acquisition research](#), it's been found time and time again that [drilling grammar](#) and memorizing patterns doesn't lead to better language abilities. You might be able to more easily pass a language test, but actually engaging with speakers of the language and getting clear ideas across requires a very different approach.

However, that's not to say that learning grammar is totally useless. After all, this primer exists with the goal of helping you learn Czech more easily. But instead of memorizing charts that don't make sense and just accepting you need to learn dozens of forms, this guide will lead you to understanding Czech more naturally and easily, so that when it comes time to use the grammar (or study it more intensely), it makes actual *sense*.

Like when you went to English class in school (or whatever your native language was), they didn't teach you *how to speak English*, but rather, how the formal grammar works, how to form clearer sentences and how to be a "better user" of the language. The same applies for foreign languages.

You must first learn to understand and use the basics of the language to communicate, then you can learn to be an efficient, eloquent and natural speaker of the language.

If you are a beginner, read through this guide over the next few weeks, a little bit at a time. I've organized it to be, roughly, in order of importance for understanding. During that time, you should be spending time learning the most basic words of the language and watching simplified

videos or reading easy texts. Since you won't be able to understand much, you should instead focus on recognizing the words you're learning or the grammar patterns outlined in this guide.

For recommendations of materials to use, check out the [Czech Learning Database](#) I put together. There is a "Beginner Materials" tab that has several recommendations for dictionaries, beginner content and more.

A tale of two* languages

Czech is a very unique language in the world. Not exactly because of its grammar, linguistic features or anything you might think, but rather because it's *literally* several languages in one.

Depending on how you count, you're actually learning 3 different languages at once: Spoken Czech, Written Czech and Slovak.

Spoken Czech is what people use day to day to interact with their friends, family and even coworkers. It's used all over the country for basically everything.

But Written Czech is the standard written language that people use for, well, writing. It's taught in schools and you'd guess that it was basically like the spoken language, but there are actually many grammatical differences. Most learners learn Written Czech since it's what's focused on in schools, grammar text books and taught by teachers.

There isn't a great comparison in English, but the closest I can think of is that, imagine we all spoke American English, but we only wrote in British English from the early 1900s. It would all be understandable, but there are certain grammar things that aren't used in the spoken language.

And then Slovak, which is considered its own, separate language, is so similar to Czech, that you'll be able to understand it just by learning Czech. It's basically just a strong(ish) accent which is written differently. Like if Australian and American were considered different languages and spelled differently.

You don't need to worry too much about Slovak, you'll mostly pick things up. Or if you do become interested at some point, it'll be a few weeks of learning some of the differences and spelling rules and that sort of thing.

But Written vs Spoken Czech is a pretty big topic.

Verbs

Conjugation

Verbs (the action words) in Czech are changed, or conjugated, to give you more information about who's doing something.

Vidím ho. (**I see** him.) Notice how the word "I" isn't included. Instead, it's shown through "vidět" looking different.

All verbs can, and usually do change like this. Which is especially important because it's very common to not say the subject of the sentence, if it's clear from just the verb, like in the example above.

Mám psa. (**I have** a dog.)

Má psa. (**She has** a dog.)

There's no additional word to say "who" has a dog, but it's very clear from the way that "mít" is conjugated.

Thankfully, this is pretty easy to get used to. The patterns are pretty easy to learn and usually, the context of a scene makes it easy enough to guess. Don't try to memorize these charts or anything. Just look at the common endings and use this as a reference every so often.

Let's look at a common verb in all it's different forms:

Verb	Meaning	Implied "who"	"Who" translation
vidět	to see	none (base form)	-
vidím	I see	Já	I
vidíš	You see	Ty	You
vidí	He/she/it sees	On/ona/ono	He/she/it
vidíme	We see	My	We
vidíte	You all see	Vy	You all
vidíte	You see (formal)	Vy	You
vidí	They see	Oni	They

Not all verbs behave exactly the same, there are a few that use slightly different endings, depending on the verb. But they're very similar and you'll get used to them very quickly.

Let's look at the common ending types for all the different pronouns (the "who" from the above table).

Já - I: You can tell when someone is talking about themselves doing something because the verb ends in an - **m** or a - **u** , or sometimes a - **uji** or - **uju** .

Děl **ám** (I do)
Pros **ím** (I beg) *This means "please"*
Cest **uju** (I travel)
Zač **nu** (I start)
Sed **ím** (I sit)

Ty - you: Knowing when someone is talking about "you" directly to another person is probably the easiest to notice since it nearly always ends in - **š**. The full endings are - **áš**, - **íš** and - **uješ**. Even verbs that don't follow this pattern usually have at least an - **s**.

Děl **áš** (You do)
Vid **íš** (You see)
Uč **íš** (You teach)
Prac **uješ** (You work)
Sp **íš** (You sleep)
J **s** i (You are) *This verb doesn't follow the pattern, but it has an S!*

On/ona/ono - He/she/it: This pattern is also pretty easy to spot. It's basically the same as the above "ty" form, but without the - **š**. The endings are - **á**, - **í**, - **uje**, - **e**. This is the same for he, she and it *in most cases*. We talk about the times when it's not later in this guide.

Děl **á** (He/she/it does)
Vid **í** (He/she/it sees)
Mysl **í** (He/she/it thinks)
Prac **uje** (He/she/it works)
Spadn **e** (He/she/it falls)

My - we: Another easy one! Czech verbs aren't too hard to get used to, which is good cause other parts of the language are... Anyway, this pattern has an - **me**, usually with the same vowel used in other patterns above. - **áme**, - **íme**, - **ujeme**, or - **eme**.

Děl **áme** (We do)
Vid **íme** (We see)
Prac **ujeme** (We work)
Sp **íme** (We sleep)
Jd **eme** (We go)

Vy - you all/you formal: We cover this again later in the guide, but this can be you like "you all" and a formal "you." They nearly always have the same pattern, which ends in - **te**. The full endings are, - **áte**, - **íte**, - **ujete**, and - **ete**.

Děl **áte** (You do)
Vid **íte** (You see)

Prac **ujete** (You work)

Spadn **ete** (You fall)

Oni - they: And the final pattern isn't quite as easy since there are some corner cases. However, it stands out as being different from everything else, so it's also pretty easy to pick up. Typically, things end in - **jí**. There are lots of - **ají** and - **ují** verbs. But there are a few that just end in - **í** or - **ou**.

Děl **ají** (They do)

Vid **í** (They see) *This is the same as he/she/it, but there aren't too many words like this.*

M **ají** (They have)

Prac **ují** (They work)

Spadn **ou** (They fall)

Js **ou** (They are)

Note on "We"

There's something that's small but very unintuitive for English speakers. When someone says "we," and then clarifies who else, it uses "with."

Šli jsme **s Bárrou** na trh. (Bara and I went to the market.)

The literal translation of this would be, "Went we are with Bara to market." If you say "we went with someone" in English, it implies that that someone (in this case, Bara) isn't part of the "we."

We went with Bara to the market.

We, Bara and I, went to the market.

Those sentences mean different things in English. In the first, we is understood to be some people, not including Bara. She just went with those people. And the second sentence includes Bara in the "we."

But in Czech, there isn't a difference. The most common way to say "we" and include someone is to say, "we with person."

This is a very small thing, but it's very useful to know since it can be confusing to work out who's doing what in a sentence if you don't know this.

Tense

The way people express when something happened is fairly straight forward (thankfully). There are just a few little tricks to be aware of.

When people talk about something that is happening now or in general, it's said in the present.

Vařím čaj. (I am making tea.)

Každý den vařím čaj. (Every day, I make tea.)

Děláš si srandu? (Are you joking?) *Literally: do you do a joke?*

And when something is being talked about in the future, "will" is used, much like in English. The other thing, which will be done in the future, is left in its base form (often called the infinitive).

Budu vařit čaj. (I will make tea.) *Literally, I will to make tea.*

Co **budeš** dělat? (What will you do?) *What you will to do?*

And when talking about things in the past, people say "I am done" something. In English, we would use "I have done," but in Czech, it's a different word. It's also very often in the opposite order, starting with the action that was completed, and then the "I am" or "you are."

Šel **jsem**. (I went.) *Gone I am.*

Co **jsi** říkala? (What did you say?) *What you are said?*

What you might also see is a sentence without "I am" or "you are" in the past. Just the action in the past.

Už **odešel**. (He already left.)

Už **odešla**. (She already left.)

This means either "he" or "she" (or it) depending on the verb (that is covered in the next section). The assumption is that, if there's no person specified, it's someone else. Not you, me, or us.

And those look like this, by the way.

Nosili jsme červené klobouky. (We wore red hats.) *There's an extra -i at the end of the action for "we" and být becomes jsme.*

Udělali jste všichni tu výzvu? (You all did the challenge?) *Same plural ending with -i, but with jste to mean "you all are."*

And then finally, if you're talking about "them" (which is very similar to he/she, but with many people), "they" isn't used. Just the action in the past, but in the plural form.

Snědli všechno jídlo. (They ate all the food.)

Gender

Some verbs change whether they're being said by a man or woman. This is usually only seen in a single form of the verb and is usually the same, but with an extra "a" at the end.

Šel jsem. (I went.) *Men say this one.*

Šla jsem. (I went.) *Woman say this one.*

The person who did (or would do) the action is what matters for the conjugation. So any speaker matches the verb to the person they're talking about.

Co jsi říká **la**? (What did you say?) *Feminine version*

Co jsi říká **l**? (What did you say?) *Masculine version*

When speaking about an unknown person (for example, in a video/audio/book addressed to a wide audience), many people will use both. This is much like seeing "he or she" in English texts.

Co jsi dělal nebo dělala... (What you did or did...) *This may be written as dělal/dělala.*

Formal speech

Like in most European languages (and plenty of other languages around the world), there are a few different ways to say "you" in Czech. One (**ty**) is considered to be more casual and you would use it with friends, family, people your age, that sort of thing. This is called *tykání*.

The more formal (**vy**) is used when you're speaking with a stranger, coworker or someone older than you. This is called *vykání*.

This distinction is pretty different for each language, but in Czech, it's fairly important. When meeting someone new, it's very common to start with **vykání** (the more formal one) and then ask how you should address each other. There are many situations where the formal address is used which may seem strange to a foreigner.

For example, coworkers very often use **vy** (the formal You), even if they've known each other and worked together for years. The closest comparison in English is to call someone "Doctor" or "Professor," even if you know them well. It's a sign of respect.

Vy is also frequently used when speaking to waiters or other people in the service industry.

Let's look at a few examples so you can tell the difference.

Kde **jste**? (Where are you?) *This is the formal version*

Kde **jsi**? (Where are you?) *This is the non-formal*

The formal version usually has a longer ending, usually with a T or ST. And the non formal is usually just an S or Š.

Chc **eš** jít se mnou? (Do you want to go with me?)

Chc **ete** jít se mnou? (Would you like to go with me?) *I changed the phrasing for the*

translation since, in English, we'd express politeness in a different way.

The formal you is actually the same as the plural you (you all). So the above example could also be translated as "Do you all want to come with me?" This is always clear from the context of a sentence.

Using these two forms are called "vykat" (formal) and "tykat" (informal). You may also see them called the more official names of vykání and tykání. Here some other forms of the word you, your, and yours that you may come across (this is not a complete list).

vykání (casual)	vykání (formal)	English
ty	vy	you
tě	vás	you
tebe	vás	you
tobě	vám	to/for you
tebou	vámi	with you
tvůj	váš	your

It's also worth mentioning that, in the past, "jste" is used, but the action is kept as singular. Which makes sense. It can be easy to fall into the trap of thinking that "you all" and "you formal" look identical, but there *are* slight differences.

Uděla **l jste** výzvu? (You did the challenge?) *This is used when speaking **formally** to a **man**.*

Uděla **la jste** výzvu? (You did the challenge?) *This is used when speaking **formally** to a **woman**.*

Udělal **i jste** výzvu? (You **all** did the challenge?) *Notice there's an -i.*

Reflexive

There are a lot of verbs, in many languages, that are "reflexive." All that means is that someone who's doing an action is also receiving that same action.

I bake **myself** a cake. *This is reflexive since I'm making the cake and receiving it.*

I bake you a cake. *This isn't since I'm doing something for you.*

In English, we frequently assume something is reflexive by using words like my or her.

I shave **my** face.

She ties **her** shoes.

But in Czech (and many other languages), there's a special way to clarify when something is being done to oneself. In Czech, there are in fact two different reflexive pronouns: se and si.

Thankfully, they are used for everyone, you only need to remember those two.

Holím **si** obličej. (I shave **myself** the face.)

Holí **si** obličej. (He shaves **himself** the face.)

If someone didn't use that little **si**, it would sound weird:

Holí obličej. (He shaves a face.) *Whose face? I don't know!*

The difference between si and se is subtle, but important. Si is used to show that you (or someone else) is receiving *something*. A thing or an action. Something physical. In the example above, a physical face is being shaved.

Se, on the other hand, is used for things that are a little more abstract. The action is going both "outward," but also "inward."

Bojím **se**. (I am afraid.)

Bojím. (??) *Without se, this doesn't make sense. In another form, it might mean "I fight," but in order to mean fear, it needs to have the se.*

Translations of these words can be a bit misleading if you think about how they work in English. "Well, I fear something, right? I am doing the action of fearing toward something else." That works in English, but not in Czech. Thinking of it more like "within myself, fear is created from xyz," might help. Another example:

Starám **se** o koťata. (I take care of kittens.) *Without the se, this sentence wouldn't be complete.*

Another good example of the difference between se and si is looking at the verb "to wash."

Myji **se**. (I wash myself.)

Myji **si** obličej. (I wash my face.)

Myji podlahu. (I wash the floor.)

As you can see, when there's nothing more specific than just "yourself" you're washing, it uses se. But a specific target of the washing, which still is your own body, uses si. And washing something totally different doesn't have anything reflexive about it.

To end this section, I also want to go over a very common phrase that isn't logical in English. "To think *a thought to oneself*."

Myslím si, že ne. (I don't think so.) *Literally: I think to myself, that no.*

Prefixes

There are many "prefixes" that are added to the beginning of a verb to slightly change the action. The closest equivalent in English is adding a preposition after the word to change its meaning slightly.

I'm finishing for the day.

I'm finishing **up** for the day.

Those sentences sound a bit different, despite meaning basically the same thing. But it's not always such a small change. Sometimes, the entire meaning changes or becomes less literal.

Please wrap it.

Please wrap it **up**. *As in, to finish something.*

Those two sentences mean very different things. The same thing happens in Czech, but with something attached to the beginning of the word.

Mluvíme. (We talk.)

Do mluvíme. (We finish talking.)

The prefix do- changes the word to be like finishing or completing the action. But there are lots of other prefixes, some with more and less clear meanings.

The prefix "roz-" is a good example of one that isn't super clear and is more based on the feeling of an action. It sorta means that an action is "going outward" or "breaking into pieces." I know that's not a very clear definition, but that's the point I'm trying to get across here.

Brečet (to cry)

Roz brečet (to make someone cry)

Loučit se (to say goodbye) *Like, saying the words.*

Roz loučit se (to part, to say farewells)

Those meanings of the verbs aren't perfectly set in stone, either. Some are used in specific situations or are preferred, even though not using the prefix would be the same.

You aren't going to be able to learn and memorize all the prefixes. You should just try to be generally aware they exist and learn some of the vague meanings so that when you see them in immersion, they're not new to you. Here's a list of a few common ones.

Prefix	General Meaning	Example	Translation	Verb	Translation
do-	Into/To Completion	dokončit	to finish	končit	to end
na-	Onto/To a Certain Level	napsat	to write down	psát	to write

Prefix	General Meaning	Example	Translation	Verb	Translation
od-	Away/Off	odejít	to leave	jít	to go
pře-		přepsat	to rewrite	psát	to write
vy-	Out/Outwards	vyjít	to go out	jít	to go
z-/ze-		zlomit	to break	lomit	to bend
při-	Towards/Arrival	přijít	to arrive	jít	to go
po-	After/Completion/Gradual	pochopit	to understand	chápat	to grasp
pro-	Through/For	projít	to go through	jít	to go
roz-	Dis-/Apart/Start	rozbít	to break apart	bít	to hit
s-/se-	Together/With/Down	sepsat	to compile	psát	to write
u-		ukončit	to complete	končit	to end
za-	Behind/Beginning	zapadat	to go down	padat	to fall
ob-	Around	obstarat	to obtain for	starat se	to care for

Hypothetical situations

A common word you'll come across is "by." It roughly translates as "would" in English and functions pretty similarly.

Rád **bych** zůstal doma. (**I would** like to stay home.) *The direct translation is "Gladly would I stayed home."*

It's used to express wishes, things that's you'd like to happen, that sort of thing. When it's combined with a second part, such as in "I wish I could..." then the "could" also gets changed in a similar way.

Přál **by** si, **aby** mohl jet na dovolenou. (He wishes he could go on vacation.) *Literally: Wish **he would** to himself **so that** he could go on vacation.*

Chtěl **bych**, **aby** bylo tepleji. (**I would** like it to be warmer.) *Want **I would**, **so that** it were warmer.*

There are a few interesting things happening in the examples. The first is that the "by" is being changed to match "who" it's applying to. Bych = I would, by = he/she would, bys = you would, etc.

You'll also notice that in the English translation, there's not really an equivalent to the "aby" or "abych" word. Think of it as a connector between the "want" and the following action. This next example might make it clearer.

Another way these words are used are in hypothetical situations. "If I had..."

Kdybych měl peníze, koupil **bych** si počítač. (**If I** had money, **I'd** buy myself a computer.)

The "bych" (I would) in the example is basically the same as above. But the "kdybych" might seem odd to an English speaker. It's like the "abych" from above. It matches who is doing the "if."

Literally, "kdy" means "when," so it's almost like saying "When would I had money, buy I would myself computer."

And you can think of "abych" as essentially "and would" (a + by). The last example above would literally translate as "Want would I, and it would be warmer." Sounds almost like Shakespeare!

The "kdyby" also changes based on who's doing the "if."

Kdyby byla pěkná, šel **bych** ven. (If it was nice, **I'd** go outside.) *Would when it were nice, went would I outside.*

And finally, just like in English, it can also be used to politely ask for something.

Mohl **byste** mi pomoci? (Could you help me?) *Could would you me help?*
Chtěl **bych** kávu, prosím. (**I would** like a coffee, please.) *Wanted I would a coffee, please.*

Overall, it's pretty easy to recognize and understand these forms. To finish this section, here's a reference chart for the various forms. Just remember that sometimes they'll have "kdy" or "a" before them...

Czech	English
bych	I would
bys	you would
by	he/she/it would
bychom	we would
byste	you (all) would
by	they would

Aspect

I hope you're not tired of verbs yet! The "aspect" of a verb is important to its meaning. Aspect isn't a very useful name though. It's easier to think of aspect as whether or not something is

happening or happened. Ongoing or finished.

Dělám úkol. (I am **doing** my homework.) *Ongoing or current*

Udělal jsem úkol. (I have **done** my homework.) *Finished action*

In English, the ongoing action is said with "-ing" at the end and something that's a "singular action" is in the past.

This is often the case in Czech as well. Things that are talked about now are being done now and things in the past are finished.

Čtu knihu. (I am reading the book.)

Přečetl jsem knihu. (I read the book completely.)

Četl jsem knihu. (I read the book *but might not have finished it.*)

But, if you were to use one of those "finished verbs" in the present, it changes the meaning. It's understood that you're not currently doing it, since there's a different way to say that, but rather, you will do it in the future.

Přečtu knihu. (I **will read** the **entire** book.) *There's no word "will" in Czech, it's implied since "přečíst" doesn't just mean "to read." It's implied that you will read the entire book.*

That example also could mean "I will finish reading the book," but that depends on the context.

The closest example in English is the difference between:

I am running. *This is something I am currently doing right now.*

I run. *This is something that I do in general or often.*

They're both in the present tense, but give different feelings of when something is happening. But instead of using "am + ing," there are two different forms for verbs.

What are those different forms you ask? It's not a simple rule (go figure, right?)!

There are a few different ways Czech differentiates between "ongoing" and "finished" verbs. The first we've already seen. Prefixes!

Some common prefixes that will turn an ongoing verb into a finished verb are: **do-**, **na-**, **po-**, **vy-**, **z(e)-**, and **pře-**.

- *dělat* (to do) → **u** *dělat* (to complete doing)
- *číst* (to read) → **pře** *číst* (to finish reading)
- *psát* (to write) → **na** *psat* (to finish writing)

Prefixes are the most common way to see this difference, but some verbs have different endings. Ongoing verbs usually end in **-ovat** or **-ávat**, while their finished counterpart end in

something shorter.

- *kup* **ovat** (to buy) → *koup* **it** (to complete the purchase)
- *d* **ávat** (to give repeatedly) → *d* **át** (to give once)

This isn't always the case, however. Prefixes are still more common.

A good habit to get into is to be aware of whether a verb is finished or ongoing according to context clues. If you can train your brain to always be thinking about this, it will become much, much easier! This *aspect* of Czech can be frustrating since it's not immediately obvious and is hard to master.

If you ever are unsure of what kind of verb something is, you can look it up in the dictionary. The official names for these kinds of verbs are:

- Finished verbs = **perfect** *Think about them being done, finished and perfect actions.*
- Ongoing verbs = **imperfect** *Think about them as not being done yet, they're still a work in progress before they're actually perfect.*

Commands

Giving orders or commands (also called the "imperative") is pretty easy to spot and use in Czech. Like most European languages, the verb just changes a bit. In this section, all the commands end with a ! to show that it's a command. This isn't a rule in Czech, though.

Mluvit. (To speak)

Mluv ! (Speak!)

Verbs change based on their base form, just like conjugations. In fact, in most cases, the command form is just the "they" form without the ending vowels.

-á verbs get an -ej ending:

Dělat => Děl **ej** ! (Do!)

-e or -í verbs get their ending chopped off:

Nést => Ne **s** ! (Carry!)

Mluvit => Mlu **v** ! (Speak!)

-ovat verbs get an -uj ending:

Pracovat => Prac **uj** ! (Work!)

-nout verbs get an -ni ending:

Tisknout => Tisk **ni**! (*Press!*)

And the last thing to note is that there are some "pronunciation" rules to change words that would sound weird.

If a command has a long vowel, it usually is shortened.

Koupit => K**u**p! (*Buy!*) - It would sound weird to say "koup," so the ou just becomes u.

And then final d, t and n become their soft forms (ď, ť and ň).

Zaplatit => Zapla**ť**! (*Pay!*)

Those two pronunciation rules can stack together, like in:

Vrátit => Vr**ať**! (*Return!*) - The á became a and the t became ť.

In order to make the command for multiple people OR formal, the -te ending is added.

Mluv **te**!

Dělej **te**!

Kup **te**!

In Czech, you can also give a command to "us" to make a sort of "let's do this thing" command. That's done with an -me ending.

Mluv **me**! (Let's talk!)

Dělej **me** to! (Let's do it!)

Kup **me**! (Let's buy!)

And then to make it a negative command (something you shouldn't do), ne- is added to the beginning. All these modifications can be stacked together.

Ne mluv! (Don't speak!)

Ne dělej **te** to! (Don't do it, y'all!)

Ne kup **me**! (Let's not buy!)

Oh and there are some irregular commands, but they're not that common and pretty easy to spot in context.

Být => Buď!

Giving and receiving commands isn't too complicated, there are just a few things to keep in mind. Everything will make sense as you engage with more real Czech.

Nouns

Articles (or lack of them)

The words "the" or "a" are called articles. They're simple little words that tell is if something is one of many (a pen) or a specific thing (the pen).

Czech doesn't use articles. There are words like "this" and "that one," but no actual articles. This section is here at the beginning just so that when you see examples later, you're not wondering where the word "the" or "a" went. They're just not needed (and don't exist)!

Gender

Grammatical gender is one of the things to learn in a new language, especially if you don't speak a language with a very similar gender system.

Grammatical gender sounds very fancy, but it's basically just a different categorization of nouns. In English, we don't have grammatical gender, but we do have different categorizations of nouns.

Can I have some water?
Can I have three waters?

These sentences are very similar, but have a specific meaning difference. In the first example, water is referring to "a thing." You can't count how much water. It's only some, more, lots, or too much.

But the second sentence is referring to individual cups or bottles of water. It *is* able to be counted.

These are different categorizations of nouns in English (countable and not countable). Something similar is happening in Czech (but it's a whole lot more complicated, so strap in).

In Czech, there are 3.5 different grammatical genders. Yes, I used a decimal.

There is the feminine (Ženský rod), neuter (Střední rod) and TWO masculines (Mužský rod). Actually, the masculine classification is split into two halves: alive and not-alive (životný a neživotný).

Living masculine nouns are things like "man" (muž) and "dog" (pes). Not-living ones are things like "table" (stůl) and "castle" (hrad). The feminine and neuter genders don't make this distinction, but they do have plenty of things that *could* be considered living/not-living. It's just not differentiated.

Your goal now is not to memorize these grammatical genders or be able to fully understand them. For now, you should focus on getting a passing understanding of them and how to

recognize them.

The feminine

These words usually end in predictable clusters of letters.

Ending	Example	Meaning
-a	žena	woman
-e	růže	rose
-ost	kost	bone
-ina	rodina	family
-ice	úřednice	female clerk
-ie	strategie	strategy
-í	recepční	receptionist

ženský: žena, růže, píseň, kost

střední: město, moře, kuře, stavení

mužský životný: muž, pán, předseda, soudce

mužský neživotný: hrad, stroj

The TWO Masculine Genders

There are two different types of masculine nouns: living and not-living.

Living:

Case	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
Nominative	každý	každí	muž	muži
Genitive	každého	každých	muže	mužů
Dative	každému	každým	muži	mužům
Accusative	každého	každé	muže	muže
Vocative	každý	každí	muži	muži
Locative	každém	každých	muži	mužích
Instrumental	každým	každými	mužem	muži

Non-living:

Case	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
Nominative	každý	každé	hřib	hřiby
Genitive	každého	každých	hřibu	hřibů
Dative	každému	každým	hřibu	hřibům
Accusative	každý	každé	hřib	hřiby
Vocative	každý	každé	hřibe	hřiby
Locative	každém	každých	hřibu	hřibech
Instrumental	každým	každými	hřibem	hřiby

Gender Identification

You can determine the gender of *most verbs* using some simple patterns. This doesn't always work, since there are plenty of irregular nouns, but using the flowchart is like 95% accurate.

First, find the base form of the word. The form that appears in the dictionary. Also known as the root word, nominative form or 1st case. Then, follow this flow...

[Czech Gender Flowchart](#)

Basic flow:

1. Is the noun a person? Then it's (probably) going to match the gender of the person.
2. Does it end in a special ending? Nouns that end in -ost are always feminine, -um and -iště are neuter.
3. Does it end in a "soft consonant?" Then it's probably feminine.
4. Does it end in a "hard consonant?" Then it's probably masculine.
5. Does it end in -A or -E/Ě? Then it's feminine.
6. Does it end in -O or -I/Í? Then it's neuter.

Cases

Cases in Czech are one of the strangest and most interesting parts of the Czech language. If you haven't learned a language with cases before, they're going to seem super weird and potentially impossible to learn. They're not! The goal with this guide is to help you get a general idea of what they look like and the information they convey.

Cause that's the big question: What are cases and *why* do they exist?

All "things" in a language interact. We can't just say sentences like, "I eat" or "He goes." We want to add more information about *what* I'm eating or *where* he's going.

Cases are just different versions of words depending on how it's interacting with other words. Let's use English as an example.

English doesn't actually have any cases, but it *used* to have them many hundreds of years ago. And we can still see the remnant of one of them with the possessive 's.

Take the sentence, "This is my parent's house." There are two different "things" mentioned in the sentence: my parents and house. We know that the house belongs to the parent because of that little 's. That's what cases do. They tell us how things interact.

You could also say "this is the house of my parents," which uses the word "of" instead. This is also a way to show the relationship between my parents and their house.

A useful way to think about cases is the name. It's not "case" like a briefcase , but rather "in this case" (in this situation).

Cases are different outfits for different situations.

Case Quick Reference

The thing about Czech cases that makes the easy AND hard to learn is that they're very dependent on situation. Each case has specific meanings. You can't just memorize patterns like "oh, case XYZ always comes after ABC!" The meaning of the sentence is critical.

This section is a quick reference covering the main meanings of each case. After, there is a whole section for each case which breaks them down more and includes examples.

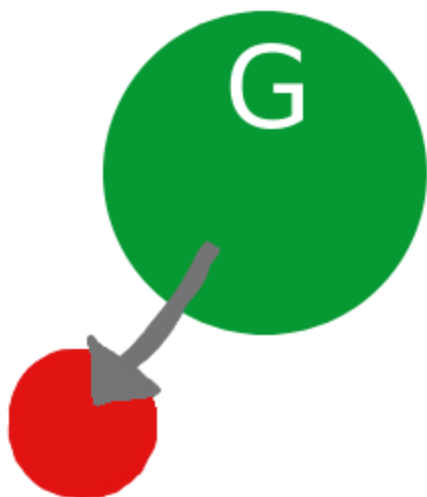
Each break down includes a diagram of what the case means, in a broad, sometimes abstract sense. Then, there's a description for it.

Nominative (1st case) "Name" case



This case is used for the main thing. The red spot is the entire sentence, it's the main thing happening. So, you just use it's name.

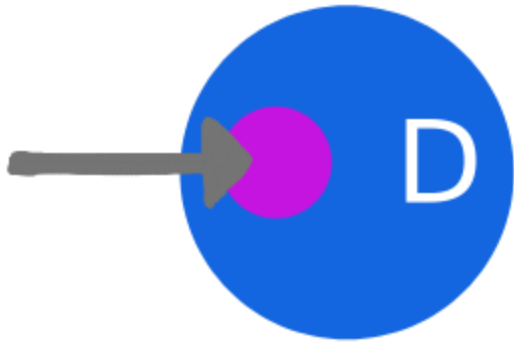
Genitive (2nd case) "Possession" case



This is one of the more complex, but also most common cases. The best way I can describe it is when something (the red spot) comes from another thing (the green). The genitive case is used for talking about the source of something. Whether it's a reference, a part of a whole or the goal of something else.

The red spot belongs to the green spot in some, usually important, way.

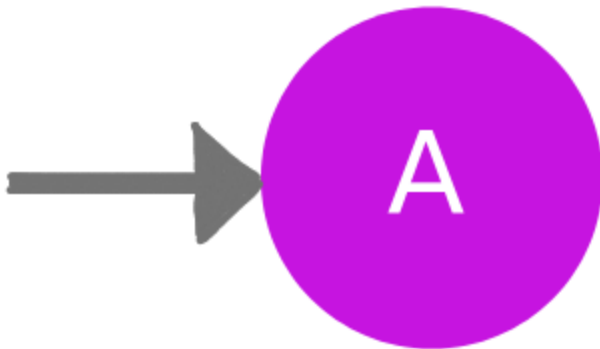
Dative (3rd case) "Receiver" case



This case is about who (or what) is receiving something. In the diagram, the blue spot is receiving the purple one (from someone else). This is most obvious when it's a physical object or idea being received (like receiving praise).

But it also is used for scenarios that have implied "things" being received, like congratulating or insulting someone. There's the implication of congratulating with congratulations, but it's not needed to say that. However, someone is still receiving congratulations.

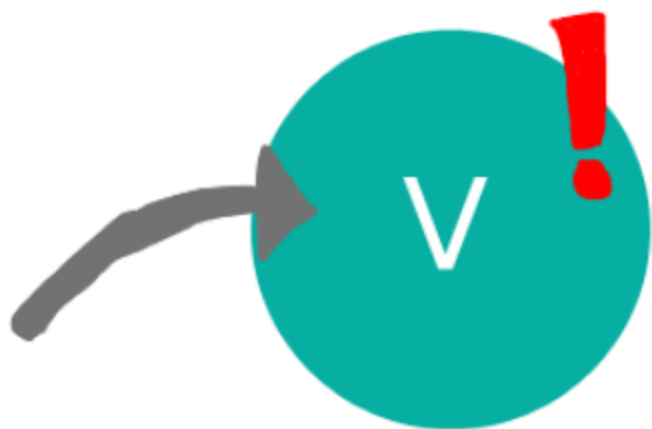
Accusative (4th case) "Destination" case



This case is used for where an action is directed toward, or where an action finishes. This is very clear when talking about going to a specific location (like going to the store), but a little more abstract with other actions.

For example, if the action is "clean," whatever is being cleaned is having the action directed toward it. Think of the grey line as being the action which starts from someone (nominative case) and is directed right at something else (accusative case).

Vocative (5th case) "Addressing" case



This case is kinda weird, but that makes it easy. It's used to addressing other people. It's always on it's own in a sentence, usually just someone's name.

Ahoj, Ben **e** ! (Hey, Ben!)

Locative (6th case) "Location" case



This case is also pretty straight forward. The yellow spot is where all the other stuff (red spot) is taking place. It's happening in or on the yellow location.

This can be a physical location (the train station, Prague, a farm) or a less obvious location for an action (on a table, in the Olympic Games, in the end).

Instrumental (7th case) "Tool" case



And the final case has to do with *what* something is done with, or the means by which it was done, or even a path through space.

Think about the action (grey arrow) as having to pass through the "instrument" in some way, either physically through somewhere or by using a tool or because of something.

Final general notes on cases

And the last thing to know, Czechs learn these cases in school, but using numbers (1st case, 5th case, etc). However, those are hard to remember, so for this guide, I'm using the official name, the number AND a more "casual" name.

Let's jump into the first situation you'll find in Czech, which is considered the "default" situation.

Nominative (1st case) - Main case

- Kdo? Co?

Section vocabulary:

Word (Nominative)	Meaning	Gender
dům	house	MI
žena	woman	F
já	I	-
stůl	table	MI

The nominative case is pretty easy since it's the "base" of all the other cases. When you look up a word in the dictionary, that's what you'll see. That's why it's called the "main" case. Even the

word "nominative" comes from the meaning "naming."

A nominative noun's role in the sentence is to be the "person/thing doing something." It usually comes first in the sentence.

Dům je nový. (**The house** is new.)

Žena se směje. (**The woman** smiles.)

There aren't any other situations where you'll see the nominative case used (technically), but some words look identical in different cases, which can be a little weird. This is why understanding the function of the word in the sentence is so critical. The look of a word may betray you, but meaning will not.

Já vidím stůl. (**I** see the table.) *The word "table" is technically not in the nominative case, but it looks the same.*

Stůl vidí mě. (**The table** sees me.) *This sentence doesn't make sense because tables don't see, but it's just an example.*

Since the nominative case doesn't have a different look and is always used to start a sentence, it's one of the easiest ones to master.

Genitive (2nd case) - Possession case

- Koho? Čeho? *Bez koho, bez čeho*
Section vocabulary:

Normal Word	Genitive Version	Meaning	Gender
otec	otce	father	MA
sousedka	sousedky	female neighbor	F
druhý ročníka	druhého ročníku	female second year	F
město	města	city	
srpen	srpna	August	
týdny	týdnů	weeks	
říjen	října	October	
koruny	korun	crowns	
dny	dnů	days	

This is the most used case in Czech. There are lots of prepositions that use it plus a range of other uses and meanings. A sort of "general but vague" way to think about it is when something

belongs to something else (possession). All uses of the genitive case are highlighted in this section.

The first common use is to express who the owner of something is. In English, an 's is added to say that "that car is my father's."

To je auto mého otce . (That is the car of my father .)

To je manžel naší sousedky . (This is the husband of our neighbor .)

Another use, which is similar, is expressing when something (or someone) is part of something larger than themselves.

Zdena je studentka druhého ročníku . (Zdena is a student of the second years .) *This translation is awkward as well. She belongs to the group of "second years."*

Hotel se nachází v centru města . (The hotel is located in the center of the city .)

This "part of a larger whole" thing also works for months. But it's also used for normal, specific dates.

Během dvou týdnů v srpnu, budu cestovat. (During two weeks in August, I will travel.)

Narodil jsem se dvacátého třetího října roku 1998. (I was born on the twenty third of October year 1998.) *Each of those parts of the date are in the genitive.*

Another use is to express "how much" of something of something there is or when there's a "large amount." This usually happens with larger numbers, abstract amounts or with things that can't be counted (like "health" or "people.")

Kolik dolarů dostanu za 100 korun ? (How many dollars do I get for 100 crowns ?)

Máme jenom několik dnů před party. (We have only a few days before the party.)

Mám hodně knih . (I have a lot of books .)

The next use of the genitive case is very common, and easy to spot. Many prepositions use the genitive case. Coming from a language without cases, this can seem pointless, but it's really just adding an additional change. The first change is adding a preposition, and the second is changing the end of the word a bit.

The prepositions that use the genitive are:

Czech	English	Example	Example Meaning
z	from	z Prahy	from Prague
od	from	od manžela	from my husband
do	to, toward	do školy	to school

Czech	English	Example	Example Meaning
blízko	nearby	blízko trhu	near the market
daleko od	far from	daleko od hospody	far from the pub
místo	instead of	místo másla	instead of butter
podle	according to	podle mě	according to me
vedle	next to	vedle auta	next to the car
u	at, near, by	u tebe doma	at your house
kolem	around	kolem domu	around the house
bez	without	bez solí	without salt
kromě	except	kromě toho	except for this
během	during	během dvou týdnů	during two weeks

The genitive case is also required with certain verbs. It's similar to English requiring prepositions like "of" to make something make sense (for example, you can't say "I'm afraid dogs." You need to say "I'm afraid *of* dogs.")

These sorts of verbs aren't too common, but there are some you should be aware of:

Czech	English	Example	Example Meaning
bát se	to be afraid of	Bojím se psů .	I'm afraid of dogs.
zbavit se	to get rid of something	Zbavil se starého mobilu .	He got rid of his old phone.
zeptat se	to ask someone	Musíš se zeptat svého doktora .	You must ask your doctor
všimnout si	to notice something	Jsem si nevšiml modrého světla .	I didn't notice the blue light.
zúčastnit se	to participate in	Zúčastnili jsme se tance .	We participated in the dance.

Dative (3rd case) - Receiver case

- Komu? Čemu?

Here's a list of vocab words in the section (mostly in order of when they're used).

Normal Word	Dative Version	Meaning	Gender
kamarád	kamarádovi	friend	
děti	dětem	children	
manželka	manželce	wife	
lékař	lékaři	doctor	
vítr	větru	wind	
dešť	dešti	rain	
škola	škole	school	
kočka	kočce	cat	
syn	synovi	son	

The dative case, which I like to think of as the receiver case, tells us to what or to who something is happening.

Píšu dopis kamarádovi . (I write a letter to my friend .)

In the sentence above, my friend is receiving something. They're not doing the action (I'm writing), they're not the thing that is being written (the letter is). They're receiving the letter.

The "flow" of energy goes like this:

I -> letter -> my friend .

This flow chart is supposed to help you visualize the difference between this dative case and the accusative case (which we'll discuss in the next section).

Let's look at another example:

Uvařila jsem polévku dětem . (I cooked soup for the children .) Notice how there's no word "for." Being in the dative case gives the same meaning.

And the flow of energy is: I -> soup -> the children

This also applies to communication. Someone might not be directly receiving *something*, but rather information of some sort. This goes for things like giving thanks (poděkovat), lying to someone (lhat) or congratulating them (gratulovat).

Nikdy bych manželce nelhal. (I would never lie to my wife .) Wife is dative since she would be receiving the lie.

The dative case does also have some prepositions that it uses.

Preposition	Meaning	Example	Example Meaning
k	toward/to	Jdu k lékaři .	I'm going to the doctor .
proti	against	Proti větru nemůžu jít.	Against the wind , I can't walk.
díky	thanks to	Díky tobě jsem to zvládl.	Thanks to you , I managed it.
kvůli	because of	Nešla jsem kvůli dešti .	I didn't go because of the rain .
naproti	opposite	Můj dům je naproti škole .	My house is opposite from the school .

Another way to receive something is a sort of "abstract experience." This is a strange case to wrap your head around, but we'll look at a few specific examples.

The first is to talk about age. Don't think of it as "being X years old." Instead, it's more like "receiving the experience of X years."

Je **mi** 28 let. (I am 28 years old.) *A more direct translation might be "It is **to me** 28 years."*
 Kolik je **vaší kočce** let? (How old is your cat?)

Another example is to talk about a physical condition, like being hot or cold. Again, someone isn't "being" hot or cold, but receiving that physical sensation.

Pršelo a bylo **nám** zima. (It rained and we were cold.) *Direct translation: "It rained and it was **to us** cold.*
 Je **mu** špatně. (He feels unwell.) *It is **to him** badly.*
 On je špatný. (He is a bad person.)

A common case that's worth mentioning is when talking about a time working for someone.

Hodí se **ti** schůzka dnes v šest večer? *Works **for you** meeting today at six evening?*
Studentovi se můj termín nehodil. *For the student my time didn't work*

! ! ! ! ! !

The final example is to express liking. It's the other way around, however. You don't like something, that thing actually pleases you. Or rather, it is pleasing to you, so it uses the dative case since you are receiving the pleasure. Same goes for food being tasty. It is tasty *to you*.

Film se **vám** líbil? (Did you like the movie?) *Literally: "The film itself **to you** pleased?*
Mému synovi nechutná ryba. (My son doesn't like fish.) *Literally: **To my son** isn't tasty the fish.*

Hopefully, you're starting to see how all these cases interweave to create sentences with more specific meaning.

Accusative (4th case) - Accusation case

- Koho? Co?

Here's a list of vocab words in the section (mostly in order of when they're used). The version on the left is the base version of the word, and the second column is the accusative version. Notice how they usually just change the last letter or two, or don't change at all.

Normal Word	Accusative Version	Meaning	Gender
pes	psa	dog	MA
písnička	písničku	song	F
kniha	knihu	book	F
pokoj	pokoj	space/peace	MI
dárek	dárek	gift	MI
město	město	city	N
hrad	hrad	castle	MI
řeka	řeku	river	F
muž	muže	man	MA
výlet	výlet	trip (vacation)	MI
sobota	sobotu	Saturday	F
hodina	hodinu	hour	F

The accusative case is used to talk about "what" or "who" in a sentence. It usually has to do with the "direction of the energy" of the sentence. When you "accuse" someone of something, you're channeling that accusation right at them. Anything **highlighted** is in the accusative case.

As an example:

Vidím **psa** . (I see **a dog** .)

The dog in the sentence is *being seen*, so it's changed from "pes" to "**psa**" to highlight that it's being seen and not doing the seeing.

Zpíváš **písničku** . (You sing **a song** .)

Čte **knihu** . (He reads **a book** .)

Dej mi **pokoj** . (Give me **space** .)

All of these actions have someone who's doing them, but also the "thing" that is being done. You're not just singing, you're singing *a song* (**písničku**). He's not just reading, he's reading *a book* (**knihu**).

It's also used with certain meanings of prepositions: **pro**, **na**, **přes**, **za** and **o** (for, on, in spite of, on behalf of, against).

Mám **dárek pro psa** . (I have **a gift for the dog** .) *Both the gift and dog are in accusative, for different reasons.*

Opřu se **o hrad** . (I lean myself **against the castle** .)

Přes řeku je most. (There is a bridge **across the river** .) *The order of words was changed to make more sense.*

Jsem tady **za svého muže** . (I am here **on behalf of my husband** .) *Svého is a version of svůj which we'll cover later.*

Jdu **na výlet** . (I'm going **on a trip** .)

The last use of this case is to tell time (sometimes).

Celou sobotu bude krásně. (**All day Sunday** will be beautiful.) *The word "day" is implied in Czech.*

Trénoval jsem **hodinu** . (I trained **for an hour** .)

Vocative (5th case) - Addressing case

- Oslovujeme, voláme.

This is one of the simplest cases since it only has one real function: to address people.

In Czech, when you're saying someone's name to them, you use this case to show that you are indeed addressing them and not just saying their name. There are some pretty simple patterns.

Ahoj, Bene! (Hello, Ben!)

For names that end with an N, they get an additional E at the end.

There are lots of different names, which you can find in this table:

Name	Vocative name	Example	Example meaning	Transformation
Zuzana	Zuzano	Pojď sem, Zuzano	Come here, Susana	a -> o
Káťa	Káťo	Káťo , máš chvíli?	Katya, do you have a moment?	a -> o

Name	Vocative name	Example	Example meaning	Transformation
Julie	Julie	Julie , můžeš mi pomoci?	Julie, can you help me?	no change
Aneta	Aneto	Aneto , jsi připravena?	Aneta, are you ready?	a -> o
Petr	Petře	Petře , pojd' sem!	Peter, come here!	r -> ře
Pavel	Pavle	Pavle , máš čas?	Pavel, do you have time?	el -> le
Marek	Marku	Marku , co děláš?	Mark, what are you doing?	ek -> ku
Matěj	Matěji	Matěji , pomůžeš mi?	Matěj, will you help me?	j -> ji
Michal	Michale	Michale , pojd' sem!	Michal, come here!	- -> e
Martin	Martine	Martine , jak se máš?	Martin, how are you?	- -> e

If your name doesn't end in one of those, here are a few ways to figure out what it'd be for your name (but the best option is to ask a Czech person).

- If your name ends with an A, use an O for the vocative
- If your name ends with a consonant (P, G, N, etc), use an E
- However, R, L or K endings might follow some more typical Czech patterns
- If your name ends in a vowel that isn't A (O, E, Y, IE), it probably doesn't change
- If your name ends in a soft consonant (Ž, Š, Č, Ř, C, J, -tel), add an I

Locative (6th case) - Location case

Thankfully, this is another pretty easy case to wrap your head around. It's all in the name! It has to do with locations. They're usually actual physical locations, but can also be a bit more abstract, such as time or a topic of conversation.

This case *always* has a preposition before it, such as, **na** (on, at), **v** (in, at), **o** (about), **při** (during, while) and **po** (after).

Let's start with some examples of physical locations.

Jsem **ve škole** . (I am **at school** .)

Znáte dobrou restauraci **v Praze** ? (Do you know a good restaurant **in Prague** ?)

Byla jsem celý den **na semináři** . (I was **at a seminar** the whole day.)

It can also be a slightly less literal "location," such as *in your head* or *in a location in time*.

Mám hodně myšlenek **v hlavě** . (I have many thoughts **in my head** .)

Moje matka má narozeniny **v červenci** . (My mother has her birthday **in July** .)

Po práci musím jít do banky. (**After work** I have to go to the bank.) *The bank might seem like a location, but it's not current, so it uses a different case (genitive) to indicate movement toward.*

Koho volíš **ve volbách** ? (Who do you vote for **in the election** ?)

Or even to talk about the "location" of the conversation.

Mluvíme **o pivě** . (We're talking **about beer** .)

Na hodině češtiny často mluvíme **o pádech** . (**In Czech lessons** we often talk **about cases** .) *In a lesson is the first location and the second is the topic of those lessons.*

Instrumental (7th case) - Tool case

The final case, instrumental, has several different uses. The first ones perfectly match the name. They have to do with what is being used to do something. In English, this is most often expressed with the word "with."

Krájím zeleninu **nožem** . (I cut vegetables **with a knife** .) *Notice how the word "with" isn't needed since the case makes it clear the knife is the tool being used.*

This is the clearest use of the instrumental, but it also is used to say "what" was used as means of transportation. If you think of the transport as being a tool, then it also makes sense.

Cestování **vlakem** je výborné v Evropě. (Travelling **by train** is excellent in Europe.)

Pojedeme **autobusem** . (We'll go **by bus** .)

As a note, some modes of transport that you physically sit on (like a bike or horse), don't use the instrumental. Instead, it's *na kole* (on a bike) and *na koni* (on a horse).

There are also some more abstract "tools" that can be used to do things. Such as looking "through a window" or "using one's heart."

Peníze vyletěly **oknem** . (The money flew out **of the window** .)

Ona zpívá **srdcem** . (She sang **with her heart** .)

There are also certain adjectives that use the instrumental case. Think of these as being "states reached by means of something." For example:

Jsi spokojený **se svým životem** ? (Are you satisfied **with your life** ?)

Jsem inspirovaná **tebou** . (I'm inspired **by you** .)

On je posedlý **starými filmy** . (He's obsessed **with old movies** .)

Some verbs also use the instrumental case in a less concrete way.

Onemocněl jsem **chřipkou** . (I got sick **with the flu** .)

Zabývám se **psaním** . (I'm interested **in writing** .)

Now, there are a few uses of the instrumental case which are much harder to understand as being "done with a tool." The first example being the words "being" and "becoming."

Stali jsme se **adoptivními rodiči** . (We became **adoptive parents** .)

Je **inženýrem** . (He is **an engineer** .)

And finally, there are several prepositions which use the instrumental case. This usually happens when the verb (the action) of the sentence is the main piece of information and the thing in the instrumental somehow describes the action.

Preposition	Meaning	Example	Example Meaning
před	in front of, before	Klid před bouří .	Calm before the storm.
před	ago	Byl jsem tam před pěti lety .	I was there five years ago.
za	behind	Chodím za domem .	I'm walking behind the house.
nad	above	Nad židlí visí lustr.	Above the chair hangs a chandelier.
pod	below	Pod stolem spí kočka.	Under the table sleeps the cat.
mezi	between, among	Žiju mezi stromy .	I live among the trees.
s	with	Co s tím děláš?	What are you doing with that?

Declension

Now that you know *why* nouns change and how that changes the meaning, it's time to learn the patterns of *how* they change.

Most words follow a short list of patterns. This section is going to cover each pattern using "model words." These model words represent all similar words. For example, one of the model words is "kost" (bone), which follows the same pattern as other feminine nouns ending with a "soft" consonant. However, like everything in human language, this isn't a perfect system.

Czech, officially, has 7 cases, which we've already looked at in this guide. But one of the cases, the vocative, is special. It's almost always used with people names and doesn't really get used

with regular nouns. Czech native speakers aren't even sure of the vocative form of many normal nouns since you never are going to say "Hey, castle! How are you today?" I've included the vocative forms so that you can see them, but if you learn how to make the vocative for people names, that's all you need.

This section is the most difficult thing about learning to speak Czech. There are so many different patterns and cases that get used in every sentence. Don't worry about being perfect, you likely never will be, and it won't get in the way of being understood. However, it's good to practice and use them mostly correctly, so at the end of this section, there's an Anki deck you can download to practice these forms.

Feminine nouns (žena, růže, píseň, kost) (woman, rose, song, bone)

Case	žena	růže	píseň	kost
Nominative	žena	růže	píseň	kost
Genitive	ženy	růže	písně	kosti
Dative	ženě	růži	písni	kosti
Accusative	ženu	růži	píseň	kost
Vocative	ženo	růže	písni	kosti
Locative	ženě	růži	písni	kosti
Instrumental	ženou	růží	písní	kostí

Here are some of the patterns you should focus on:

- The instrumental case usually just adds an -í to the end, and for some, an -ou. But it's different from all other cases.
- For nouns that end in a consonant (píseň and kost), dative, vocative and locative are the same, with just a little -i at the end. And the accusative is the same as the base form! It's pretty much just genitive that changes.
- The růže nouns don't change much. It's basically just -e and -i endings.
- Dative and locative are always the same.

Something... annoying about these model words is that there are several word endings that are the basically the same, except they also use a different consonant sound sometimes. These types of words (noha, moucha, deka, můra) have the exact same endings as **žena**, but one consonant changes in a few cases, where the final sound is a soft -e.

Case	noha	moucha	deka	můra	žena
Change	H -> Z	CH -> Š	K -> C	R -> Ř	<i>none</i>
Nominative	noha	moucha	deka	můra	žena
Genitive	nohy	mouchy	deky	můry	ženy
Dative	noze	mouše	dece	můře	ženě
Accusative	nohu	mouchu	deku	můru	ženu
Vocative	noho	moucho	deko	můro	ženo
Locative	noze	mouše	dece	můře	ženě
Instrumental	nohou	mouchou	dekou	můrou	ženou

Don't worry about studying these explicitly, it's easy enough to get used to since it happens in some predictable places.

Neuter nouns (město, moře, kuře, stavení) (city, sea, chicken, building)

Case	město	moře	kuře	stavení
Nominative	město	moře	kuře	stavení
Genitive	města	moře	kuřete	stavení
Dative	městu	moři	kuřeti	stavení
Accusative	město	moře	kuře	stavení
Vocative	město	moře	kuře	stavení
Locative	městě	moři	kuřeti	stavení
Instrumental	městem	mořem	kuřetem	stavením

Some tips for remembering:

- The nouns that end in -ní are very easy. Everything is the same except the instrumental, which gets an -m like all the other cases.
- For all the neuter nouns, the nominative, accusative and vocative are the same. I like to imagine that it's like that since neuter nouns are so often in the accusative case, that it stays the same to keep things simple.
- moře and kuře are basically the same, the only difference is that kuře needs a "buffer letter" before adding the ending. It just adds -et- before using the same endings as moře.
- The instrumental is always a bit weird with an -m.

Masculine animate nouns (pán, muž, předseda, soudce) (sir, man, chairman, judge)

The masculine gender is split into two (because of historical Czech). Animate (living) and inanimate (not living). They function almost the same, but there are differences, so try to pay attention to those. It's very easy to figure out if a masculine noun is animate or not; is it alive? Or no?

Case	pán	muž	předseda	soudce
Nominative	pán	muž	předseda	soudce
Genitive	pána	muže	předsedy	soudce
Dative	pánovi	muži	předsedovi	soudci
Accusative	pána	muže	předsedu	soudce
Vocative	páne	muži	předsedo	soudce
Locative	pánovi	muži	předsedovi	soudci
Instrumental	pánem	mužem	předsedou	soudcem

Remembering tips:

- Dative and locative are always the same, which makes sense, since the locative doesn't *really* make sense with living things. So it just borrows from the dative. The most common locative use for these nouns is when you're talking "about" them, so the dative kinda makes sense. They're also always the -i or -ovi endings.
- Again, instrumental is weird and gets an -m ending (usually).

Masculine inanimate nouns (hrad, stroj) (castle, machine)

Case	hrad	stroj
Nominative	hrad	stroj
Genitive	hradu	stroje
Dative	hradu	stroji
Accusative	hrad	stroj
Vocative	hrade	stroji
Locative	hradě	stroji
Instrumental	hradem	strojem

Tips for remembering:

- Basically the same as the other masculine nouns, except that there isn't the "exception" that dative and locative are the same.
- Instrumental is still the -m case.
- These function pretty similar to the neuter nouns with nominative and accusative being the same and genitive and dative also being similar (except stroj HAS to be special).

Here's the Anki deck you can use to practice these forms. It doesn't include the vocative case since that's not useful for nouns that aren't people names (and removing 1/7th of the deck makes it much more manageable). *Note: this version doesn't include plural. This message will be removed when plural is added.*

 Czech Declension Practice.apkg

Adjectives

The describing words that come before a word have to match what they're referring to. There's no good comparison in English, but the difference between "much," "many," and "a lot of" is the closest. You can't say, *I have many food*, that sounds wrong. *I have much food*, could work, but it still sounds super weird. But, *I have a lot of food*, is perfectly normal. But *I have many ideas*, works just fine.

In Czech, the adjective (words like "green," "large," "beautiful") must match the gender and case of the word they're describing.

Hezká žena mluví. (The beautiful woman speaks.)

Hezký muž mluví. (The beautiful man speaks.)

Here's a paragraph of each gender and case and how the ending of the adjective will change. Each gender has a different adjective as an example, but they could all be used in any case/gender. All that changes is the ending.

Case	Feminine (hezká)	Neuter (správné)	Masculine Animate (vysoký)	Masculine Inanimate (dobrý)
Nominative	hezká	správné	vysoký	dobrý
Genitive	hezké	správného	vysokého	dobrého
Dative	hezké	správnému	vysokému	dobrému
Accusative	hezkou	správné	vysokého	dobrý
Vocative	hezká	správné	vysoký	dobrý
Locative	hezké	správném	vysokém	dobrém
Instrumental	hezkou	správným	vysokým	dobrým

As you can see, there are lots of different endings depending on the gender and case. This is a little difficult to learn to use, but thankfully, LOTS of them overlap. And it's pretty easy to understand. Here are some tips:

- You can mostly forget about the vocative case for adjectives. It's not very common to see or use (vocative is mostly for names of people) and it's the exact same as the base form anyway.
- Accusative is the "odd one out." Sometimes. For feminine and masculine animate, the ending gets a special -ou or -ho ending.
- Feminine adjectives don't change too much. There's basically the -é endings for the 3 slightly weird ones (gen, dat and loc) and then the 2 very weird ones get -ou.
- The other genders basically share everything except for the nominative and, strangely, the accusative. But dat, gen, loc and instr are all the same!

As a beginner, just focus on understanding and trying to notice the patterns. Ones you're a little further along, it'll be a lot easier to learn these seemingly nonsensical patterns.

Now, not to scare you, but there are also endings for plural nouns. A lot of these overlap in all the different genders, so they're actually easier than the chart makes it seem.

Notice how all the genitive, dative, locative and instrumental are the same across all genders. And then nominative, accusative and vocative are the same within each gender. The actual declension of the plural nouns is much more head spinning than the adjectives.

Case	Feminine (hezké)	Neuter (správná)	Masculine Animate (vysocí)	Masculine Inanimate (dobré)
Nominative	hezké	správná	vysocí	dobré
Genitive	hezkých	správných	vysokých	dobrých
Dative	hezkým	správným	vysokým	dobrým
Accusative	hezké	správná	vysoké	dobré
Vocative	hezké	správná	vysocí	dobré
Locative	hezkých	správných	vysokých	dobrých
Instrumental	hezkými	správnými	vysokými	dobrymi

Prepositions

It's worth putting an entire section just for prepositions here in the declension section since they're a little weird to understand, but are a great example of when/why nouns decline.

A preposition is a little word that goes before a noun to show how it related to other nouns in the sentence. Prepositions actually serve a very similar purpose to declining things. English doesn't need declension since it uses prepositions.

I bought a present **for** my sister.

My sister bought a present **for** me.

The word "for" in the examples shows who is buying the present *for whom*.

The Czech versions of those examples do the exact same thing.

Koupil jsem dárek **pro** svou sestru.

Sestra koupila dárek **pro** mě.

But also look at the word "sestra" and how it changes between them. In the first example, it is connected to "pro" (for), playing the role of the receiver, while in the other, it's being the "actor" of the sentence.

"Pro sestru" is correct because the preposition "pro" always uses the *accusative case* after it. Think of it like a trigger. The same thing actually happens in English (and Czech lol) for "me" vs "I."

You can't say, "Is that **for I** ?" You must say, "Is that **for me** ?"

Anyway, all Czech prepositions trigger a different case to be used. Many of the prepositions *always* use a specific case, but some depend on how the word is being used.

We'll start with the easier ones that always trigger a specific case. A (more) complete list is at the bottom of the section.

This, that, these, those

While Czech doesn't have words for "a" or "the," there are still words for this/that and these/those. Being able to point to specific things and say, "that one" is important, and used all the time.

Like in English, there are a lot of these little words and they can look very similar. You're going to have to get used to their meaning first, so really pay attention to context when you're listening to Czech. Once they make sense, it's a lot easier to make sense of these charts.

These seem really confusing and complicated (I thought so too), but thankfully, they're pretty sane. It's just the nominative and accusative that change between

Case	Feminine (ty)	Neuter (ta)	Masculine Animate (ti)	Masculine Inanimate (ty)
Nominative	ty	ta	ti	ty
Genitive	těch	těch	těch	těch
Dative	těm	těm	těm	těm
Accusative	ty	ta	ty	ty
Locative	těch	těch	těch	těch
Instrumental	těmi	těmi	těmi	těmi

Case	Feminine (tyhle)	Neuter (tahle)	Masculine Animate (tihle)	Masculine Inanimate (tyhle)
Nominative	tyhle	tahle	tihle	tyhle
Genitive	těhle	těhle	těhle	těhle
Dative	těmhle	těmhle	těmhle	těmhle
Accusative	tyhle	tahle	tyhle	tyhle
Locative	těhle	těhle	těhle	těhle
Instrumental	těmihle	těmihle	těmihle	těmihle

Possessive Pronouns

These are words like "my," "her," "our," etc. They're a lot like adjectives (since they describe something about a thing) and the above "demonstrative" pronouns (this/that/those). Learning how to change them for each case is complicated (like everything else is), but there's one key difference that makes Czech possessive pronouns interesting.

There are all the pronouns you'd expect:

- Můj - my
- Tvůj - your
- Jeho - his/its
- Její - her/its
- Náš - our
- Váš - you all's/your (formal)
- Jejich - their

But then there's also a special additional one that you'll see *everywhere*:

- Svůj - one's

The first list is used in cases that you'd generally expect:

To je její dům. (That is her house.)

Moje kočka je roztomilá. (My cat is cute.)

But the special pronoun, svůj, is used when the "whose" it's referring to is already clear.

Chytil jsem svou bundu. (I grabbed my jacket.)

Chytil svou bundu. (He grabbed his jacket.)

In both of those examples, "whose" jacket it is isn't specified. It's implied that it's the same as the doer (aka the subject) of the sentence. If you wanted to specify someone else's jacket, it'd look like this:

Chytil jsem tvou bundu. (I grabbed your jacket.)

Chytil moji bundu. (He grabbed my jacket.)

The place that this can get a little confusing is when you're saying something that isn't already clear.

Podělil se o svůj vlastní nápad. (He shared his own idea.)

Jeho nápad je dobrý. (His idea is good.)

Svůj nápad je dobrý. *This doesn't work since it's not clear who's idea we're talking about.*

You can, in theory, find situations when it is clear from context and use svůj like in the final explanation, but those scenarios are best learned from exposure and repetition.

Pronouns

Pronouns are used instead of saying something's full name. In English, you don't need to constantly say "Dave." You can use he/him/his, as long as it's clear that it's referring to Dave.

Czech also has pronouns, but many more than are used in English. This is because pronouns change between cases. Which English also does.

He went to the store with **her** and bought **himself** a gift.

He went to the store with **she** and bought **he** a gift. *You can't use the same pronoun for different cases.*

The 7 cases of Czech all have slightly different pronouns. Don't try to memorize this list, but you can refer to it from time to time as you get more comfortable understanding Czech sentences.

There are a few different kinds of pronouns. There are the normal ones that replace nouns (he, us, with her...) and also question pronouns (what, which, with whom). You will see all of them in the charts, but don't worry if they're a little confusing. When you see them in immersion, they'll become clearer.

https://en.wikiversity.org/wiki/Czech_Language/Pronouns

Nominative Case Pronouns (1st)

Czech	English	Czech	English
já	I	my	we
ty	you	vy	you
on, ona, ono	he, she, it	oni	they
		Vy	you (formal)
kdo	who	co	what

Notes: Formal pronouns are often capitalized in writing, this is true for many forms, but it won't be mentioned again. | The pronoun for "they" (oni) technically also has the forms ony and ona, but they're very rarely used in spoken Czech.

Vy jste připravená? (Are you ready?) *Formal, addressing a woman.*

Já mám rád kočky. (I like cats.)

Oni jsou moji kámoši. (They are my friends.)

Co to je? (What is it?)

Dropping the pronoun

In Czech, the nominative pronoun is usually just skipped. It's not needed to clarify what's happening in a sentence. Refer back to the conjugation section for a refresher.

Já jsem student. (I am a student.)

Jsem student. (I am a student.) *It's more common to say it like this.*

Genitive Case Pronouns (2nd)

WIP

Czech	English	Czech	English
mě	me	nás	us

Czech	English	Czech	English
tě, tebe	you	vás	you all
jeho, jí, jeho	him, her, it	jich	them
něj, ní, něj	without him, of her, by it	nich	without them
		Vás	you
koho	who	čeho	what

There are two rows with him, her, it pronouns since some are used without prepositions, and others with prepositions. The "without prepositions" group starts with a "j."

Dative Case Pronouns (3rd)

Two dative "me"s

There are two pronouns that are just different versions of each other, used in different scenarios. Mně and mi are both dative pronouns, but one is preferred at the beginning of a sentence and the other in the middle/end. Sort of like how ů and ú are the same sound, but written at different points of the word.

- Mně (beginning of sentence)
- Mi (middle of sentence)

Mně se to líbí.

Podáš mi telefon?

Technically, it's *not* incorrect to use them the other way around, but it sounds weird.

Accusative Case Pronouns (4th)

Locative Case Pronouns (6th)

Instrumental Case Pronouns (7th)

Sentences

The ways to say "if"

In English, the word "if" does a lot of heavy lifting. It actually has many different meanings. There are several ways to say "if" in Czech, depending on the kind of if being used.

když (if/when)

This one is used for times when you're generally talking about pretty general conditions or about when something happens.

Když dorazíš, zavolej mi. (**When** you're back, call me.)

Když nedostaneš balíček, řekni mi. (**If** you don't get the package, tell me.)

jestli (if/whether)

This is used for conditional statements, especially when the answer isn't known and could be answered with a "yes" or "no."

Nevím, **jestli** můžu jít. (I don't know **if** I can go.) *The if could also be translated as "whether or not."*

Nevadí, **jestli** prší. (It doesn't matter **if** it rains.)

pokud (if/provided that)

This one can often be interchanged with "jestli," but has a stronger leaning toward cause and effect. Provided that something happens (if something happens) is a good way to think about it.

Pokud máš čas, půjdeme do kina. (**If** you have time, we'll go to the movies.) *"If" in the translation could be replaced by "provided that."*

kdyby (if/were it to be true that)

This one is covered in the hypothetical situations section. It's used for when you want to say "if something were to be true." The "by" part gets changed to match the thing that "were to be true." So *kdyby* means "if s/he were to" and *kdybych* means "if I were to."

Kdybych měl více peněz, koupil bych nový počítač. (**If I** had more money, I would buy a new computer.) *This version of if is only used in these kinds of hypothetical situations.*

-li (if/in the case that)

There's also another, more literary "if" that you will mostly come across in more formal or written language. You'll see it in books, but not much in daily speech. It's written a little weird, too, which makes it hard to look up in a dictionary.

Najdeš **-li** ho, zavolej mi. (**If** you find him, call me.)

Yeah, that's how it's written. As a -li. There's always a dash and it's the only place I've seen dashes used in Czech. It's weird!

It's also put after the verb for some historical reasons. It's sorta like coming across a phrase in English that we use despite not being a part of the modern language, like "to and **fro**" or "**whilst**."

It's translated as "if" or "in the case that," much like *jestli* and *pokud*.

Casual Speech

Most Czech is spoken between regular people, not trying to be "proper" or anything. People use the language every single day for hundreds of thousands of different things. This speech is close to the "formal language," but there are many things that you'll hear in spoken language that aren't in official text books.

ý or ej?

One of the most common differences you'll come across is the replacement of "ý" for "ej"

Jsem nemocný. (I'm sick.) *Formal and official way to say this.*

Jsem nemocn **ej**. (I'm sick.) *A very, very common spoken form.*

This replacement is all over the place. It's even frequently written, for example, in subtitles or text messages.

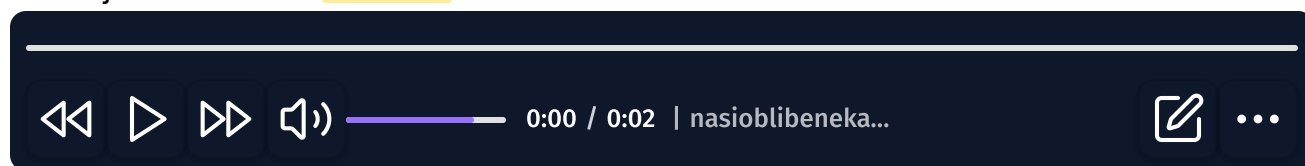
The annoying part about most of all these informal changes to the language is that they don't appear in dictionaries. If you look up *nemocnej*, you won't get any results. But if you just change that *-ej* to *-ý*, it will show up. For this reason, I actually *prefer* to use AI chatbots as dictionaries. They don't mind colloquial forms of words, and generally have better answers.

Pronouncing -é like -ý

Some dialects, especially closer to Prague, pronounce *-é* as if it was *-ý*. Yes, this can be a bit confusing since cases and endings are *supposed* to be super important in Czech.

Listen to the word "oblíbené" in the following sentence.

Stavili jsme se v naší **oblíbené** kavárně.



This is a great example of why cases are good to learn, but there is more flexibility in what's "correct" than what you'll be told in a textbook.

Alternate endings

Another great example that cases are made up is that there are some alternate endings to words that get used in spoken Czech all the time.

The plural adjective ending for many words is officially "é," but all over the country, you can write and say "ý."

Má modré oči. (He has blue eyes.) *Formally correct version.*

Má modrý oči. (He has blue eyes.) *Common casual version.*

This is slightly different from the case above where é might be pronounced like ý since this is a change that is written and generally accepted in casual language use.

This happens with a lot of different plural adjectives and in some other places in the language. The primary reason is "simplification," making the endings of words a little easier/faster to say.

Starting with V

Another common spoken sound change is adding the sound "v" before words that start with "o."

To je on! (That's it!)

To je **v**on! (That's it!)

This sound is usually *not* written, it's mostly ignored and treated exactly the same as if the word started with an "o." Unless the actual word already starts with "vo," like "voda."

This is similar to how, in English, speakers add a little "w" sound between certain words.

Go (w)outside! Say *this aloud and feel like you say a little w sound between the words.*

I did say that this isn't usually written, but sometimes a writer will use it to show that the character is speaking with an accent. Hagrid, in the Harry Potter series, for example, uses vo-.

Vanishing Ls

Sometimes, well actually, very often, if a word ends in a consonant then L, it's just not said. So, letter clusters like -kl or -dl.

This is another change that's mostly in speech, but you may occasionally see it written too.

Neřekl jsem to. (I didn't say it.) *Formal*

Neře **k** jsem to. (I didn't say it.) *Informal*

This *typically* happens with verbs (there are more verbs that might end in an L), and since there's a feminine ending that adds an -a to the end of a verb, so women don't end up saying this nearly as much. Which is more of an interesting detail than anything important to know. But you know what, we're this far into this guide that I'm going to add the little facts I want to 😊